

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for maintaining updated antivirus files within a computer network comprising at least one user computer and at least one central service computer, the user computer and the central service computer each having an antivirus database, the network being connected to an antivirus server, the method comprising:

receiving a new antivirus file at one of the user computer and the central service computer and updating the computer's antivirus database; and

comparing the antivirus databases of the central service computer and the user computer to determine if one of the databases contain a new antivirus file not contained within the other database;

whereby the central service computer and the user computer are each configured to send the new antivirus file to the other of the central service computer and the user computer to update the antivirus database.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer network comprises a plurality of user computers communicatively coupled with the central service computer and antivirus server.

5                   3. The method of claim 2 wherein the central service computer is configured to periodically send updated antivirus files to the user computers.

10                  4. The method of claim 1 wherein the central service computer is configured to periodically obtain updated antivirus files from the antivirus server.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the antivirus server and the central service computer are both connected to the Internet.

15                  6. The method of claim 5 wherein the antivirus server hosts a web site on the Internet.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying the central service computer of the new antivirus data file located on the user computer, and the user computer inquiring whether to update the antivirus database with the new antivirus files.

5

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the new antivirus file contains at least one new virus definition.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the new antivirus file contains an updated version of an antivirus signature file.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein comparing the antivirus databases comprises finding the antivirus file with the latest version number.

15

11. The method of claim 9 wherein comparing the antivirus database comprises finding the antivirus file with the latest updated date.

12. The method of claim 1 further comprising using the new antivirus file to scan files located on the user computer and identify infected data on the computer.

5 13. The method of claim 12 further comprising cleaning the identified infected data on the computer using the new antivirus file.

10 14. The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying one of the central service computer and the user computer of the new antivirus files contained within the other of the central service computer and the user computer.

15 15. The method of claim 1 further comprising identifying the new antivirus file on the user computer not contained within the antivirus database of the central service computer.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising automatically sending the new antivirus file to the central service computer.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein receiving a new antivirus file comprises receiving a new antivirus file at the user computer.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising determining a location  
5 from which the new antivirus file was received.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein comparing the antivirus databases comprising comparing the antivirus databases only if the new antivirus file was received from the antivirus server.

15

20. A system for maintaining updated antivirus files within a computer network comprising at least one user computer and at least one central service computer, the network being connected to an antivirus server configured for providing new antivirus files to the central service computer and the user computer, the system comprising:

an antivirus database located on each of the user computer and the central service computer;

an antivirus database comparison application located on the user computer and configured to compare the antivirus databases of the central service computer and the user computer to determine if one of the databases contain a new antivirus file not contained within the other database; and

memory for at least temporarily storing said antivirus database;

whereby the central service computer and the user computer are each configured to send the new antivirus files to the other of the central service computer and the user computer.

21. The system of claim 20 wherein the computer network comprises a plurality of user computers in communication with the central service computer.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein the central service computer is configured to periodically send updated antivirus files to the user computers.

5 23. The system of claim 20 wherein the central service computer is configured to periodically obtain updated antivirus files from the antivirus server.

24. The system of claim 20 wherein the new antivirus file contains at least one new virus definition.

10 25. The system of claim 20 wherein the new antivirus file contains an updated version of virus definitions.

15 26. The system of claim 20 wherein the user computer further comprises an antivirus program operable to identify infected files located on the user computer and clean the infected files.

27. A computer product for maintaining updated antivirus files within a computer network comprising at least one user computer and at least one central service computer, each of the user computer and the central service computer having an antivirus database, the network being connected to an antivirus server, the product comprising:

computer code that receives a new antivirus file at the user computer and updates the user computer's antivirus database;

computer code that compares the antivirus databases of the central service computer and the user computer to determine if one of the databases contain a new antivirus file not contained within the other database, the central service computer and the user computer each being configured to send the new antivirus file to the other of the central service computer and the user computer; and

a computer readable medium that stores said computer codes.

15 28. The computer product of claim 27 wherein the computer readable medium is selected from the group consisting of CD-ROM, floppy disk, tape, flash memory, system memory, hard drive, and a data signal embodied in a carrier wave.

29. The computer product of claim 27 further comprising code that scans files located on the user computer to identify infected data.

30. The computer product of claim 27 further comprising code that cleans 5 the infected data.

31. The computer product of claim 27 further comprising code that notifies one of the central service computer and the user computer of the new antivirus files contained within the other of the central service computer and the user computer.

32. The computer product of claim 27 further comprising code that automatically sends the new antivirus file to the central service computer if it is not located with the antivirus database of the central service computer.

15